

Engaging People, Linking the World –

Broadband Planning Activities Update Report



The Nebraska Information Technology Commission Community Council (NITC), University of Nebraska - Lincoln (UNL), Nebraska Department of Economic Development (DED) and the AIM Institute are cooperatively leading the effort to address the broadband planning needs of Nebraska's communities. The update is focused around the three project areas – Capacity Building, Technical Assistance and Regional Planning.

Capacity Building -

This project will benchmark technology use across relevant community sectors; set goals for improved technology use within each sector; and develop a plan for achieving its goals, with specific recommendations for web-based application development and demand creation. Projects include:

- ***Internet Connectivity and Use in Nebraska: Household Survey UNL.*** Nebraskans were surveyed about their computer and Internet usage, challenges and desires for the future. *Status:* 6600 Nebraskans surveyed in February 2010 – 47% response rate. Survey results were shared at regional forums in Spring 2011 and are available at broadband.nebraska.gov. Follow-up survey will be conducted in 2014 that will over sample unserved or underserved populations that were identified in initial survey.
- ***Business Survey DED.*** Businesses will be surveyed through the Business Retention and Expansion process to identify the strengths and challenges they face in utilizing technology. *Status:* Businesses continue to be surveyed using DED's BR&E program. Data has been gathered from over 400 key businesses. Sixteen communities currently hold a license to input data in eSynchronist; additional licenses were made available in the Quarter 3 2011. A separate broadband survey was implemented in Quarter 2 2011.
- ***Inventory of Broadband and Digital Literacy Programs UNL.*** In order to identify potential partners and to avoid duplication of efforts, an inventory of broadband and digital literacy programs will be conducted. *Status:* Initial scan of current efforts to inventory broadband and digital literacy has occurred. Efforts to work with the Nebraska Library Commission have been made.
- ***Focused Surveys UNL.*** Focused surveys will be conducted in underserved areas including reservations, North and South Omaha, North Central Nebraska. In addition, limited monies are available to provide analysis of data for communities that wish to look further at their community. *Status:* Initial conversations started in Summer 2011 in best approach to survey specific populations. Work is in process with a cultural coach connected to specific populations on an abbreviated survey to gather information.
- ***Government and Economic Developer Survey UNL.*** Surveys will gather information on access, adoption, usage and technical assistance needs of all county and community governments, chambers of commerce and economic developers, and explore technology usage. *Status:* Development will begin later part of 2011 with a goal of being conducted in 2012.
- ***Creating Broadband Plan/Administrative UNL.*** Regional technology plans as well as a statewide report and recommendations will be created through project. *Status:* To achieve the objectives of the grant, the broadband planning oversight team meets on a bi-monthly basis. In August 2011, Jan Jackson Cejka joined the team as a communications

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specialist. Supplemental grant funds were officially released to the University in June 2011 and in August/September subcontracts were released to the AIM Institute and Department of Economic Development.

Technical Assistance -

The Nebraska Broadband Technical Assistance Program will provide technical assistance on supporting entrepreneurs through technology, and other topics to local governments, chambers of commerce, and economic developers especially in areas with lower than average broadband subscribership. Projects include:

- **Statewide Conference AIM Institute.** Conduct Statewide Conference focused on broadband adoption and utilization. *Status.* 2011 conference will be held November 1, 2011 in Lincoln, Nebraska. Key note speakers are Jessica Zufolo, Rural Utilities Service, and Tom Koulopoulos author of *Innovation Zone*. Other sessions include best practice and ISP panels.
- **Regional Workshops UNL.** Regional Workshops will be held to address specific issues related to an area on broadband adoption and utilization. *Status:* Regional Workshops will begin in 2012.
- **Webinars UNL.** Up to four webinars will be held each year of the grant to address broadband adoption and utilization. *Status:* Over 40 individuals listened to the first webinar on September 21 entitled Broadband 101. Of those that completed an evaluation, 100% plan to attend future webinars and thought the topic was relevant. Don Gray will give an update on the Broadband mapping process at the next webinar. Webinars are archived at broadband.nebraska.gov.
- **Best Practice Videos UNL/AIM Institute.** At least 20 examples of best practices in expanding broadband adoption across Nebraska will be highlighted. *Status:* Criteria for the best practices are being developed and candidates will be identified. In addition, the best practice session at the statewide conference will be taped for future reference.
- **Entrepreneur Acceleration System (EAS) DED.** An entrepreneurial mentoring program will focus on the human capital of the founders and their core teams that includes addressing how broadband can help strengthen entrepreneurs in the state. *Status:* More than 25 mentors were selected for the EAS program; 124 companies and over 550 individuals are participating in the program. Participating companies completed the five core workshops led by Gallup in Quarter 1 and Quarter 2 2011. Companies are also provided one on one support from a Gallup certified mentor and participated in self-paced activities administered online throughout program. Nearly 200 broadband surveys were collected from EAS participants in 2Q 2011. Anticipate analysis of surveys in Quarter 3 2011.
- **Technical Assistance Expertise UNL/Steering Team.** The focus of this effort will be to provide technical assistance in the area of business and entrepreneurship to chambers of commerce, economic developers, and local and county stakeholders statewide and regionally to increase broadband adoption. *Status:* Technical assistance expertise will be conducted as needs are identified.
- **Broadband Portal Development UNL.** Develop a central broadband portal which will serve as a source of information on broadband efforts in Nebraska. *Status:* Temporary site has been created to gather information and can be accessed at nebraska.broadband.gov. The official



site will be launched during Quarter 4 2011.

Local and Regional Planning

The Nebraska Broadband Local/Regional Technology Planning Teams program will augment regional planning approaches identified in the initial grant application with community planning, business and entrepreneurial discussions, government discussions, and agricultural discussions. Activities include:

- **Regional Planning Teams UNL.** Regional planning teams will be formed to create the regional plans. *Status:* Eight regional forums were held during 2011. Highlights on the local regional planning include:
 - Eight UNL Extension Educators were identified to serve as regional coaches.
 - Over 300 individuals participated in the eight regional forums
 - Of these 300, around 80 initially indicated a willingness to serve on the planning teams. Regional coaches have additional planning members who represent a broad area of interest.
 - The planning teams will use a recently updated workbook called, *Engaging People. Linking the World: Broadband Planning Workbook*. A downloadable version is available at broadband.nebraska.gov.
 - Regions are at various levels of the planning process. For example, the Northeast region has held several sessions. The planning team identified additional members to be involved and had specific conversations about broadband in general. Ground rules were set and many spin off ideas were discussed. Additional data is going to be gathered around areas such as youth with assistance from the service providers looking at serviceable versus non-serviceable areas.
- **Community Planning – North and South Omaha UNL/AIM Institute in North and South Omaha.** North and South Omaha were identified as underserved regions/areas through the survey of Nebraska households. *Status:* Identified a preliminary list of community partners to engage in developing and implementing adoption and utilization. Goal is to begin meeting the end of November.
- **Community Planning - Cultural and Unserved Communities UNL.** Additional community or local planning teams in regions/areas identified as underserved through the survey of Nebraska households and broadband mapping data.
 - Cultural coach has been identified to work with the tribes and to provide guidance in North and South Omaha.
 - The cultural coach and steering team members met with members of the Winnebago Tribe, Santee and Omaha to begin collaboration on the project. Through meeting, the cultural coach has found, “The overall concern is with access and affordability for individual families and homes, even though some technology may be ‘available.’ Many homes do not have computers, and individuals rely mostly on cellphones/smart phones for communication and/or internet access. Some are interested in other forms of communication such as a local community radio station.”
 - Encourage key stakeholders to participate in the statewide conference and begin expanding efforts in November.



- The *Engaging People, Linking the World Broadband Planning Workbook* is being translated into Spanish to meet needs of this specific population.
- **Focus Groups UNL.** Seven to 10 focus groups will be held with anchor institutions and utility providers as well as populations with low usage rates. *Status:* Initial focus groups have been identified. Beginning to identify questions to ask and developing a process to link the focused surveys and focus groups.
- **Community Sector Discussions UNL.** Community sector discussions will be held to further advance adoption of technology in specific industries such as business and entrepreneurs, chambers of commerce, agriculture and the health industry. The focus of each discussion will be to benchmark technology use across the specific sectors, set goals for improved technology, and develop a plan to achieve goals. *Status:* The community sector discussions will begin in 2012 and conducted by UNL.

Challenges. We have a good working relationship with the Public Service Commission. The delay in the administrative details waiting to utilize the supplemental funds has caused some timing challenges and frustration. We continued to plan for the future; however, many items have been delayed, including the statewide conference, web portal, focused groups/surveys, and best practice videos.

Project Partner Steering Team:

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State of Nebraska

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